

Amendments to the Claims

Please amend Claims 1, 10, 13, 20 and 21 to read as follows.

1. (Currently Amended) An ink jet printing apparatus to form an image on a print medium by ejecting ink onto the print medium from a plurality of nozzles arrayed in a print head, the printing apparatus comprising:

recovery means to recover a normal ink ejection state of each nozzle in the print head; and

recovery operation determining means for dividing the nozzles into a plurality of blocks, the nozzles divided into the plurality of blocks forming a nozzle array, the plurality of blocks being divided in a length direction of the nozzle array, counting the number of ejections from the nozzles in each block and, based on the accumulated number of ejections for each block, determining whether or not to execute a recovery operation of said recovery means.

2. (Original) An ink jet printing apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein said recovery operation determining means determines to execute the recovery operation on the print head when at least one of the accumulated numbers of ejections for the individual blocks reaches a predetermined threshold.

3. (Original) An ink jet printing apparatus as claimed in claim 2, wherein the predetermined threshold is a value that differs from one block to another.

4. (Previously Presented) An ink jet printing apparatus as claimed in claim 2, further comprising:

accumulated ejection number correction means to correct by a weighting value the accumulated number of ejections counted for each block,

wherein said recovery operation determining means compares the accumulated numbers of ejections corrected by said accumulated ejection number correction means with the predetermined threshold.

5. (Original) An ink jet printing apparatus as claimed in claim 4, wherein said accumulated ejection number correction means increases the weighting value as the position of the associated nozzle block is farther away from an ink supply port of the print head and multiplies the accumulated number of ejections by the associated weighting value to correct the accumulated number of ejections.

6. (Original) An ink jet printing apparatus as claimed in claim 4, wherein the weighting value is changed according to a temperature in the ink jet printing apparatus.

7. (Original) An ink jet printing apparatus as claimed in claim 6, wherein the weighting value is increased as the temperature in the ink jet printing apparatus rises.

8. (Original) An ink jet printing apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the recovery operation includes an operation of moving ink in the print head.

9. (Original) An ink jet printing apparatus as claimed in claim 8, wherein the recovery operation includes a preliminary ejection for ejecting ink not involved in a printing operation from each nozzle.

10. (Currently Amended) An ink jet printing apparatus comprising:
print head control means to control a print head having a plurality of nozzles for ejecting ink according to print data;
print head recovery means to recover a normal ink ejection state of each nozzle in the print head;
recovery operation determining means for deciding whether or not to execute a recovery operation of said print head recovery means; and
an accumulated print dot number counter to divide the nozzles of the print head into a plurality of blocks, the nozzles divided into the plurality of blocks forming a nozzle

array, the plurality of blocks being divided in a length direction of the nozzle array, and count the accumulated number of print dots for each block,

wherein said recovery operation determining means determines, based on a value of said accumulated print dot number counter, whether or not to execute the recovery operation of said print head recovery means.

11. (Previously Presented) An ink jet printing apparatus as claimed in claim 10, further comprising:

weighting means to apply different weights to the values of the different blocks of said accumulated print dot number counter,

wherein said recovery operation determining means determines, based on a result of the weighting, whether or not to execute the recovery operation.

12. (Previously Presented) An ink jet printing apparatus as claimed in claim 11, wherein the weight applied by said weighting means is based on a structure of a liquid chamber in the print head.

13. (Currently Amended) An ink jet printing apparatus to form an image on a print medium by using a print head, wherein the print head includes a plurality of nozzles for ejecting ink, an ink supply port to receive a supply of ink, a liquid chamber to

deliver the supplied ink to the nozzles, and a plurality of nozzle heaters provided one in each nozzle to heat the ink and thereby form a bubble in ink in each nozzle to eject the ink by a pressure of the expanding bubble, the printing apparatus comprising:

print head recovery means to recover a normal ink ejection state of each nozzle in the print head;

recovery operation determining means for determining whether or not to execute a recovery operation of said print head recovery means; and

an accumulated print dot number counter to divide the nozzles of the print head into a plurality of blocks, the nozzles divided into the plurality of blocks forming a nozzle array, the plurality of blocks being divided in a length direction of the nozzle array, and count the accumulated number of print dots for each block,

wherein said recovery operation determining means determines, based on a value of said accumulated print dot number counter, whether or not to execute the recovery operation.

14. (Original) An ink jet printing apparatus as claimed in claim 13, wherein a target accumulated print dot number, on which is based a decision to execute the recovery operation, is set large for blocks near the ink supply port.

15. (Original) An ink jet printing apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein a direction in which the ink is ejected from the nozzles is almost vertical.

16. (Previously Presented) An ink jet printing apparatus as claimed in claim 1, comprising a plurality of print heads.

Claim 17 (Canceled).

18. (Previously Presented) An ink jet printing apparatus comprising:
print head recovery means to recover a normal ink ejection state of each nozzle in a print head;

memory means to store an accumulated number of print dots printed by each of the nozzles; and

recovery operation determining means for setting different target print dot numbers to different nozzles and checking if the accumulated number of print dots printed by each of the nozzles has reached the corresponding target print dot number, in order to determine whether or not to execute a recovery operation of said print head recovery means,

wherein the target print dot number, on which is based a decision to execute the recovery operation, is set large for nozzles near an ink supply port.

19. (Previously Presented) An ink jet printing apparatus comprising:

print head recovery means to recover a normal ink ejection state of each nozzle in a print head;

memory means to store an accumulated number of print dots printed by each of the nozzles; and

recovery operation determining means for setting different target print dot numbers to different nozzles and checking if the accumulated number of print dots printed by each of the nozzles has reached the corresponding target print dot number, in order to determine whether or not to execute a recovery operation of said print head recovery means,

wherein the target print dot number, on which is based a determination to execute the recovery operation, is set large for a central portion of the print head and small for end portions of the print head.

20. (Currently Amended) A print head recovery method for recovering a normal ink ejection state of each of nozzles in a print head used in an ink jet printing apparatus, wherein the ink jet printing apparatus forms an image on a print medium by ejecting ink onto the print medium from a plurality of nozzles arrayed in the print head, the print head recovery method comprising:

a recovery operation determining step which divides the nozzles into a plurality of blocks, the nozzles divided into the plurality of blocks forming a nozzle array, the plurality of blocks being divided in a length direction of the nozzle array, counts the number of ejections from those nozzles making up each block and, when at least one of the accumulated ejection numbers counted for the individual blocks reaches a predetermined threshold, decides to execute a recovery operation.

21. (Currently Amended) A printing apparatus to form an image on a print medium by ejecting ink onto the print medium from a plurality of nozzles arrayed in a print head, the printing apparatus comprising:

print head recovery means to recover a normal ink ejection state of the print head having the plurality of nozzles for ink ejection; and

recovery operation determining means for determining whether or not to execute a recovery operation of said print head recovery means, based on an accumulated number of ejections from predetermined nozzles in the print head, the predetermined nozzles being a portion of the plurality of nozzles forming a nozzle array, the predetermined nozzles being positioned anywhere in a length direction of the nozzle array.

22. (Previously Presented) A printing apparatus as claimed in claim 21, further comprising:

means for executing the recovery operation of said print head recovery means when the accumulated number of ejections reaches a predetermined value.

23. (Original) A printing apparatus as claimed in claim 21, further comprising:

means for executing the recovery operation when the accumulated number of ejections from one of the predetermined nozzles reaches a predetermined value.

24. (Previously Presented) A printing apparatus as claimed in either of claim 22 or 23, wherein the predetermined value differs from one of the predetermined nozzles to another.